

2014 GERA Proposal

Title: Pros and Cons in U.S. and Chinese Education: A Survey with Chinese College Students, Faculty Members and Administrators

Abstract

A common goal of educational reforms in the U. S. and in China is to improve student learning achievement. Target of the reforms is aimed at helping students become knowledgeable and qualified citizens that can meet the work challenges and demands in the new century. Common issues in the reforms include curriculum design, expectations, assessment, individuality, and instructional approaches. It is believed that perspectives from outside can sometimes help educators recognize the pros and cons in their own practices. This survey study was conducted to investigate how Chinese college students, faculty members and administrators view Chinese and American educational systems. The study also explored what the two sides could learn from each other for their educational excellence respectively.

Rationale and Purpose of the Study:

The United States and China are both reforming their educational systems for educational excellence. In the U.S., much effort of the reform is to improve students' test scores to ensure student learning; while in China, making the system less test driven but more qualified in terms of student ability is the focus. This survey study was conducted to see how Chinese college students, faculty members and administrators view the two systems in terms of pros and cons in practices. It also explored what the two countries could learn from each other. The study was designed to address these major questions:

- What are the pros and cons in Chinese and U.S. educational practices?
- What can China and the U.S. learn from each other in addressing some common educational issues?

Methods and Procedures:

The researcher visited three Chinese universities in summer 2013. Survey was conducted with undergraduate and graduate students (n = 300+), faculty members (n = 120+), and administrators (n = 40+). Interviews were conducted with 20+ faculty members and administrators following the survey.

Major Findings:

- Chinese college students, faculty members and administrators were interested in U.S. education, and many of them claimed that they knew pretty much about U.S. education.
- In general, U.S. education has been successful.

- On some major issues, pros in one system could be weakness in the other, and vice versa. For example, individual development was viewed as educational excellence in U.S. system but as weakness in the Chinese system. Meanwhile, test performance was weakness with U.S. students but as strength with Chinese students.
- Chinese and U.S. educators could learn from each to address some common challenges.

This has been a pilot study of an on-gong project comparing U.S. and Chinese educational practices. The study will help educators in both countries to broaden their views in understanding and reforming their practices for educational excellence. As the project continues with a wider array of comparisons more findings will be reported both in the U.S. and in China.

Key Words:

Educational reform, global perspective, comparison